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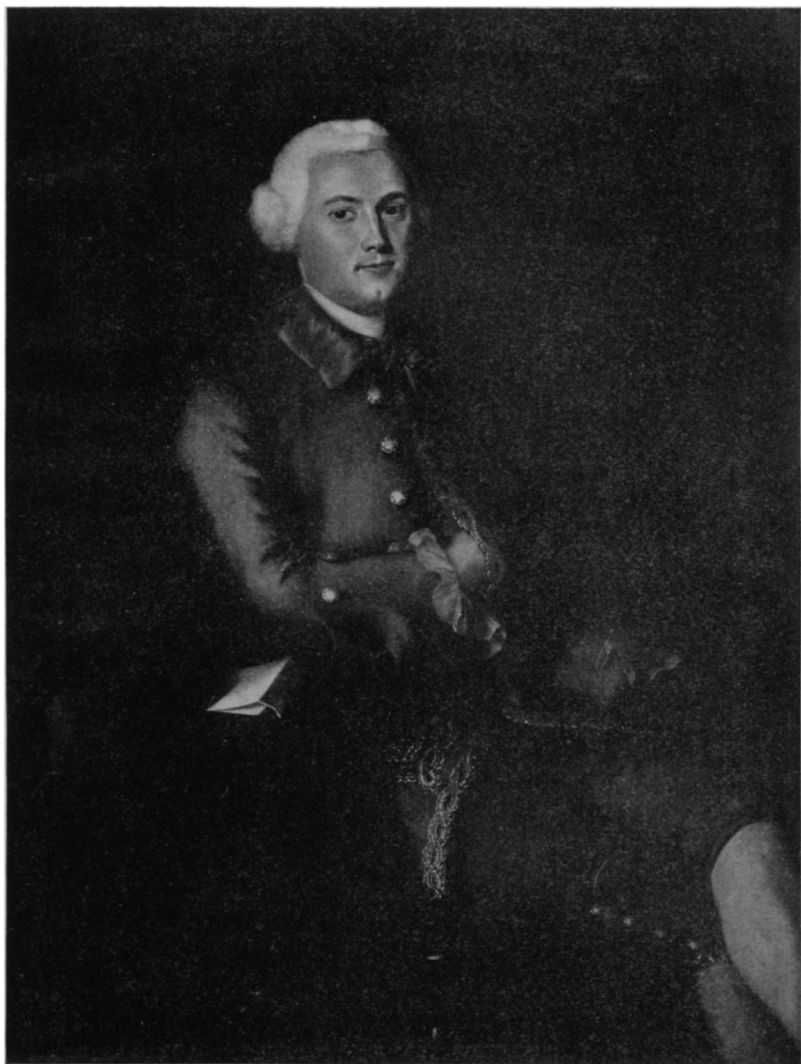
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Portrait of John Browne
By Joseph Blackburn
The John Huntington Collection

THE BULLETIN OF THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

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TWO PORTRAITS BY JOSEPH BLACKBURN

Two portraits painted by Joseph Blackburn which have recently been purchased by the Museum are now hung in Gallery I. This artist has until recently been known by the name of Jonathan B. Blackburn, in spite of the fact that all of his signed works thus far discovered, bear, with one exception, the signature I. Blackburn. As I and J were in Blackburn's time used interchangeably the writer was in doubt as to which was the initial of his Christian name, until he discovered last spring in a private house in Brooklyn, New York, a portrait signed Jos. Blackburn, which settled the point. No portrait by him has been found bearing a date earlier than 1754, and none after 1761, and it is the writer's opinion that he was, judging from his name, of lowland Scotch birth or ancestry, and from the character of his work that he was English-taught, and that these two dates confine the period of his sojourn in this country. Neither his birth nor death dates have been found, nor is it known whither he went after leaving nor why he left, but the suggestion that his departure may have been hastened by the increasing fame of Copley may be not without foundation.

The two portraits from his brush now acquired by the Museum were painted toward the end of his career on this side of the water and represent two members of the New England aristocracy of the time. One is a portrait of John Browne, the other of Mrs. Theodore Atkinson. John Browne was a son of Benjamin and Eunice (Turner) Browne, of Salem, Massachusetts, where his birth occurred July 21, 1735. His mother is the subject of one of Smibert's most pleasing portraits, and his sister and her husband Timothy Fitch both sat to Blackburn. Browne was born to wealth and high social position and moving to Boston early in life he still further strengthened his position by marrying, in 1779, Martha Allen, a member of a prominent Boston family. The only instance of his activity in public life seems to have been his election to the office of selectman of Boston in 1776. He died in 1789, leaving a widow, but no children. Of his family, Colonel Benjamin Pickman, of Salem, writing in 1793,

says: "I would observe that the family of the Brownes has been the most remarkable family that has ever lived in the Town of Salem, holding places of the highest trust in Town, County and State, and possessing great riches."

Browne's portrait, which measures 48½ inches in height by 39 inches in width, was painted about 1760, and shows him as a slender young man of high color with an expression pleasant and care-free, seated in a mahogany chair and dressed in a suit of ashen plum color, embroidered with silver braid. His wig is powdered, his stockings white, and at his wrists are well painted thin muslin ruffles. His left leg rests upon his right knee and his right elbow upon a table, with the hand partially thrust into his waistcoat. The left hand is pressed against his hip. At the left of the canvas hangs a golden brown curtain which lies in folds upon the table, on which also is an unopened letter with a red broken seal. The background is of very dark warm tones.

In the portrait of Mrs. Atkinson we see depicted a Colonial leader of social life who, if she did not have "all the blood of all the Howards," had its New England equivalent, since she was the daughter of a royal governor of New Hampshire, sister of another, and wife of the chief justice and richest man of the province. Her pose and expression suggest that she felt sure of her position in society, but it must be admitted that her face is not particularly patrician. Her parents were John Wentworth and his wife Sarah Hunking, and she was born in Portsmouth, July 4, 1700. She married first, Samuel Plaisted, a member of an influential family, who died in 1730, and in the following year Hannah Plaisted became the wife of Theodore Atkinson, fourth of the name and a Harvard graduate, who acquired great wealth through fortunate investments in New Hampshire real estate. As an Indian fighter, secretary of the province, councillor and chief justice, he held a position scarcely inferior to that of the governor, his brother-in-law; and his popularity was such that although a Tory during the Revolution, his property was not confiscated. Mrs. Atkinson died in Portsmouth December 12, 1769, her only son having pre-deceased her by six weeks. It is interesting to note that Blackburn also painted portraits of her husband and son, and Copley one of the son's wife, and that all of these portraits are now in public ownership.

Mrs. Atkinson's portrait, which measures 49½ inches in

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height and $39\frac{1}{8}$ inches in width, is signed and dated 1760, and shows her erectly seated, wearing a white satin gown and a white muslin kerchief. On her head and falling upon her shoulders is a white scarf, under which her very dark brown hair is brushed back from a low forehead. Her complexion is ruddy as from exposure to the rigors of many New Hampshire winters. Pearl ear-rings and a pearl or crystal necklace with a pendant under her double chin, add to the interest of the costume. The sleeves are finished with a white muslin ruching. A bow at her breast and the lacing of the bodice are of blue, and a changeable silk scarf of greys, browns and bluish greens crosses over the right shoulder, falls upon the lap where the left hand holds it and reappears at the side of full skirts. The right hand, raised to the level of the breast, holds the scarf with a light touch. In the background at the right is draped a dark green curtain, and at the left is an opening in a dark brown wall, through which is seen a tall tree, with dark blue sky and sunset-tinged clouds. There is a startling similarity in pose and arrangement of costume between this portrait and Blackburn's portrait of Mrs. Gillam Phillips painted five years earlier which suggests that both pictures were painted from a lay figure and that the sitters posed only for the head.

L. P.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

BY MARGARET T. NUMSEN

(Prepared for the Anniversary Meeting, June 6, 1919)

During the year 1918, 251 members joined the Museum, of which 235 were Annual, 13 Life, 1 Fellow and 2 Fellow for Life. 26 deaths occurred among the members and there were 277 cancellations. This brought the total membership on January 1, 1919, to 2540, a net loss for the year of 56.

The number of cancellations, while large, was considerably less than that sustained in the previous year, and was, moreover, attributable in great part to the unsettled conditions caused by the war, there being many removals from the city for business reasons, resignations because of financial stringency, etc. This decrease in membership is, of course, deeply to be regretted, as the Museum needs and unquestionably merits the support of an active and steadily increasing membership. The financial and moral coöperation thus afforded are factors of vital import in the institution's growth, and a city of Cleveland's size and wealth should assuredly furnish a supporting membership of at least 5,000. This is, moreover, quite



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